

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kate Conetta, and I am from Danbury. As a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence, and as part of the leadership team for Action Together, CT, I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB-6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders.

Gun violence touches the lives of everyone, directly and indirectly.

We often discuss situations that gain a high media profile, whether that is a community group conflict, a mass shooting or even the fallout from a criminal act of some kind. But gun violence also extends its reach in other ways, such as veteran suicide (an average of 20 per day) or in cases of domestic violence (roughly every 16 hours, a woman in this country is shot to death by an intimate partner). Here in CT, nearly two thirds of gun deaths are from suicide. It is a quiet and deadly epidemic.

HB-6355 seeks to make some changes to existing ERPO law which will strengthen protections in our communities by allowing family members and healthcare professionals to directly petition the court for an RPO (only law enforcement and state's attorneys can currently do so). It would require a court hearing prior to the return of firearms to demonstrate that there is no longer an imminent risk. Additionally it would extend the option of issuing an RPO to those who do not yet own a firearm, but have presented a risk of imminent harm to self or others.

Given that there are often warning signs that precede violent or suicidal behavior, ERPOs are a strong tool to prevent gun violence. These common sense measures would further support a law that provably reduces firearm suicide and contributes to the prevention of potential mass shootings.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Conetta
Danbury, CT